

KEYNOTE LUNCHEON ADDRESS

OF

**THE HONORABLE DEBORAH J. DANIELS
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**

AT THE

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION:
ENHANCING POLICY AND PRACTICE**

ON

**MONDAY, JULY 22, 2002
WASHINGTON, DC**

I'm delighted to be here today. Over the years, our Annual Research and Evaluation Conference has grown to become the largest, most prestigious forum in the nation for the exchange of criminal justice evaluation results, research findings, and program information.

This conference has served as the platform for the announcement of major research findings that have changed the face of criminal justice in this country. Over these next few days, I look forward to hearing more about recent and ongoing research and the implications for criminal justice policy, practice, and programming.

But I have to confess that I accepted Sarah's invitation to speak today with some trepidation. When she asked me to be the luncheon speaker, I recalled the words of American writer Charles Dudley Warner. He said, "There is but one pleasure in life equal to that of being called on to make an after-dinner speech, and that is **not** being called on to make one."

I know you've had a long morning listening to discussions of weighty research issues. But I want to talk to you briefly about a few more issues I

hope you'll be able to digest along with your lunch.

This year's conference theme – enhancing policy and practice – reflects our approach to research and evaluation at the Department of Justice. It's critical that front-line practitioners have the data and information they need to make informed decisions about criminal justice policy, practice, and programs.

We've already seen what a tremendous impact research and evaluation can have on criminal justice in this country. For example, research has contributed to the tremendous strides American policing has made over the last several decades.

As a result of research and evaluation, our nation's law enforcement officers today are better educated, better trained, and better equipped than ever before.

They are more professional. Today, most departments have standards of conduct for officers and policies for holding officers more accountable to the community.

Police work is now more efficient and more effective than ever before, as technology has become readily available and better adapted for use by law enforcement.

And community policing has spread from a concept debated by academics to established practice in law enforcement agencies nationwide. Today, almost two-thirds of police agencies in this country have formal community policing policies and are now working more closely with their communities to prevent and control crime.

Research has advanced criminal justice in other areas, as well.

Research on violence against women has led to new policies for investigating domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking; for dealing with offenders; and for providing services to victims.

Research has led to advancements in forensic science -- such as the use of DNA -- that has resulted in new tools for identifying suspects, exonerating the innocent, and solving crimes. Through our National Institute of Justice, we're working to increase the capacity of state and local crime laboratories to analyze DNA evidence, reduce the backlog in DNA testing, and help solve "cold" cases.

I'm delighted that, in Sarah Hart, NIJ's Director, we have not only a practitioner who recognizes the tremendous value of social science and technology research to practitioners, but who also is an expert in DNA issues. Sarah and I believe that, by concentrating on a comprehensive approach to the way this nation deals with DNA analysis, we can literally change the face of criminal justice practice in this country. By building lab capacity, improving available technology, improving crime scene collection

processes, and eliminating the backlog of DNA samples, we can solve cases faster and actually prevent future crimes. Attorney General Ashcroft recognizes this promise as well, and we were delighted when he decided this year to add to our ability to reduce the DNA backlog by transferring \$25 million in asset forfeiture funds to the effort – nearly doubling the amount of money we had available for this important purpose.

Research has also resulted in the development of other technology that helps criminal justice practitioners do their jobs more efficiently and safely – like bulletproof vests, less-than-lethal weapons, and weapons detection systems.

And thanks in large part to your work on evaluations, we now know more about what works in preventing and controlling crime than we've ever known before. Over the last decade, as we've learned how to turn research results into practice, we've seen crime rates drop across the country.

But – as you well know – confronting crime is a continual challenge. While we've made important progress in reducing crime and improving the justice system, we still have a long way to go to ensure the safety of our communities. There are many issues for researchers and practitioners still to resolve. And there are new challenges to address in this constantly changing world.

Foremost among these is the new challenge of terrorism. The terrorist attacks on America have resulted in a number of new realities for criminal justice in this country.

With the federal focus on terrorism, state and local criminal justice practitioners will have to do more with less.

– Already state and local agencies are feeling the manpower pinch as employees are called to active military duty.

– Police and prosecutors are faced with increasing responsibilities in

the investigation and prosecution of bank robberies, white-collar crime, and other incidents that traditionally have been within the domain of federal law enforcement.

– That increase in cases, in turn, will result in more work for our courts and more offenders going into state and local correctional facilities.

We must continue researching best practices, to learn what we must do to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of every aspect of the criminal justice system.

At the risk of giving everyone indigestion, I also have to talk about the money crunch. I'm sure it's no surprise to any of you when I say that budgets – at every level of government – are tight and likely to get tighter.

At the federal level, funds must be increasingly focused on counterterrorism and core federal law enforcement responsibilities. At the state and local level, the need for traditional criminal justice services, combined with increasing homeland security responsibilities, are putting a

severe strain on budgets already suffering from the economic downturn.

At the Department of Justice, we recognize that, in waging our nation's war on terrorism, we must not retreat in our war on traditional crime. We must strike a balance between national security and neighborhood safety. We must find ways to maximize our resources so that we can continue to make advances on both fronts.

The Office of Justice Programs remains committed to providing financial and other assistance to support criminal justice research and programming at the state and local level. However, we, too, must face budget realities.

One unpleasant reality is the loss of our discretionary funding in recent years. These funds – through which we provide direct support for innovative or national-scope programs – have been increasingly earmarked by Congress for specific programs. This year, we have virtually no discretionary funds. It's all been earmarked – 100 percent of Byrne discretionary and Juvenile Justice discretionary funds, 84% of Crime Lab Improvement funds, and so on down the line.

These fiscal realities mean that we all have to be more creative with our existing resources. We know from the most recent BJS report on criminal justice expenditures that federal dollars account for only a small piece of the pie – about 19 percent. Most funding for criminal justice comes from local governments. Local government spending accounts for

51 percent of all justice system expenses, while state spending accounts for 39 percent.

So we're encouraging jurisdictions to use their limited federal grant funding to build partnerships and to leverage other resources – from state, local, and private organizations – to sustain their efforts.

We're also working to help jurisdictions focus funds on criminal justice programs and approaches that have been shown – through research and evaluation – to be effective.

At OJP, we've been meeting with major criminal justice organizations to discuss how we can be a better information broker on “what works” in preventing crime and improving justice operations. We're working to determine what information exists on best practices in criminal justice, then take the creative work that's going on across the country and broker it so that everyone can take advantage of approaches that work.

We're also engaging in an exercise, aimed at the 2004 budget and

beyond, of funding only those programs for which research indicates a likelihood of effectiveness in reducing crime, preventing delinquency, or whatever the goal of the individual program might be. And all programs must have a goal which, if met, will make a real difference in the quality of life for people in this country, in the context of crime prevention, detection and response. We will thus be relying heavily on the research community to help inform our own policies and programming.

We're also encouraging better cooperation and coordination to maximize criminal justice efforts – at every level of government.

For example, the Department of Justice has engaged in an unprecedented collaboration with several other agencies of the federal government, to deal with the challenges posed to communities by the release from prison of violent and other serious offenders. This group, according to the most recent BJS data, recidivates at a rate of 67.5% within three years of release, thus posing a significant threat of new crimes in the communities to which they return. By collaborating with the Departments

of Education, HHS, HUD, Labor and others, we can help ex-offenders deal with the myriad obstacles standing between them and a life as productive citizens, and we can protect communities from likely predators. Just as we are collaborating on the federal level, providing \$100 million in joint funding to address this issue, we've required applicant communities to collaborate on the local level, leveraging their own resources to create a sustainable program which will reduce recidivism within this population. We all need to go the extra mile to ensure we're coordinating our efforts and working together so that our initiatives – and our resources – will have maximum impact.

Research must play a critical role in these efforts. We need more evaluations to identify effective criminal justice policy, practice, and programs so that we can make better decisions on how to invest limited public dollars. And, as those of you who attended yesterday's session on frugal evaluations learned, program evaluations need not be complicated or expensive. There are simple, effective steps you can take to ensure

meaningful – but cost-effective – evaluations.

I also encourage you to take a close look at your research and evaluation agendas to ensure that your work addresses the needs of criminal justice and the realities of crime in the post-9/11 era.

In preparing for any new research initiative, I encourage you to ask yourself three important questions:

First, how can you use the powerful engine of research to drive criminal justice policy and programming and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of criminal justice operations? Is your planned research going to significantly advance criminal justice in this country?

Second, is the planned research relevant to today's new realities? Will it help criminal justice practitioners – those on the front lines – to address current issues? Pure research – knowledge for knowledge's sake – is a luxury our nation cannot afford given today's needs and our current economic climate.

And, third, when you're preparing to publish your research, ask yourself: Is this report likely to be read and easily understood by the practitioners in the field? Today's busy practitioner doesn't have time to sit down and try to digest a thousand page research tome.

I urge you to make your research reports concise and user-friendly. A report that's never read is like the tree that falls in the forest – it will have little impact. As an NIJ report notes:

“Criminal justice research provides new knowledge that can affect policies, yield new programs, and suggest new approaches to aid those on the front lines of the fight against crime. Yet this potential can only be realized if new knowledge is communicated effectively, to the right audiences, and in a form that facilitates implementation.”

In closing, I want to assure you of the Justice Department's continued commitment to providing federal support for research and evaluation. In fact, I've made evaluation a priority for OJP and am working to ensure that it is an integral component of every program we fund.

All of us at the Department also remain committed to ensuring the independence and integrity of the research we fund.

As some of you may know, OJP currently is undergoing a reorganization to combine duplicative functions and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of agency operations. Part of our reorganization plan proposes to consolidate all OJP research and evaluation responsibilities within the National Institute of Justice.

This plan will allow the appropriate coordination of research activities, eliminate the potential for duplication, and ensure that research is clearly segregated from the program function, in order to preserve the integrity of the research. Just as importantly, this centralization will ensure that the scarce funding provided for research within the Justice Department is allocated for research that will inform policy and programmatic decisions, and be useful to practitioners in the field.

To those who fear that research in a critical area such as juvenile

justice will somehow be subordinated in the process, I assure you of our undiminished commitment to this specialized area, and the need for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to continue to be the primary driver of juvenile justice policy – and continue its primary role in determining the course of juvenile justice research.

Our intention is to build on the significant contributions research has already made in making our nation's criminal justice system more effective, more efficient, and more equitable. I trust that the research community will rise to the challenges faced by criminal justice in the post-9/11 era. Thank you for all you are doing to help meet those challenges.